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CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

FINAL RECORD OF THE FIVE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 27 July 1989, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Luvsandorjiin Bayart (Mongolia)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 521st plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with its programme of work, the Conference continues today its consideration of agenda item 4 entitled "Chemical weapons". However, in conformity with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Norway and Chile. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, Ambassador Huslid.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway): Mr. President, let me first congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of this Conference for the month of July. I am confident that your skill and experience will guarantee efficient leadership of our negotiations during this month.

I am not going to make a policy statement today, as State Secretary Helga Hernes did so at the end of the spring session. My contribution will be limited to the presentation of two working papers which have been circulated to delegations. One of these, CD/936, deals with verification of alleged use of chemical weapons and contains the main result of the past year's research at the Division for Environmental Toxicology of the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment at Kjeller, near Oslo. The other, CD/935, deals with verification of a comprehensive nuclear test ban and gives an account of recent developments in the Norwegian seismic verification programme. Both of these documents concern research programmes which have been the subject of Norwegian contributions to this Conference for quite some time.

The working paper on verification of alleged use of chemical weapons gives a summary of this year's research report, which will be presented to the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in the near future.

This year the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment introduced a new technique of analysis for verification of alleged use of chemical weapons. This is known as the headspace gas chromatography technique, which permits analysis directly on samples without prior cleaning procedures. Based on this simplified method, research is being continued with a view to further developing procedures to be followed by an international inspection team.

In 1989 the research has focused on the application of this new technique. Two series of field trials have been carried out: one in February, the other in June. In the first exercise, four different sample materials were contaminated with 1 mg each of the nerve agents sarin and soman and left outdoors for exposure to the prevailing weather conditions. Samples were collected for analysis at different time intervals in order to get an idea of the deterioration rate of the agents. In the second exercise the number of agents was increased to five: tabun, sarin, soman, mustard gas and diisopropyl methylphosphonate. The number of sample materials was increased to 10. Analysis was carried out after two and four weeks. A separate exercise was conducted to evaluate the influence of various temperatures during the transport of samples.

I will not go into the results of these experiments here, as that would go too far, but will confine myself to referring to the working paper and the

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research report. In this context, I would like to underline the close link between this research programme and the negotiations on article IX of the chemical weapons convention. Together with Canada, Norway has, as you know, submitted a proposal for a text concerning general procedures for verification of alleged use of chemical weapons as an annex to this article (document CD/766 of 2 July 1987). In the light of the progress in the negotiations on the guidelines for the International Inspectorate, the time should now be ripe for a discussion on how the specific problems concerning verification of alleged use should be incorporated into the convention.

Before leaving the subject of our negotiations on the chemical weapons convention, I would like to inform the Conference that the Norwegian authorities intend to carry out a national trial inspection of a production facility towards the end of the year.

Since 1982 Norway has been contributing to the work of the Conference on Disarmament on seismological verification measures for a comprehensive nuclear test ban. In particular, these documents have addressed various aspects of a future global system for international exchange of seismic data as envisaged by the Ad hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Co-operative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events.

Norway has consistently maintained that such a global system must take advantage of the rapid, ongoing technological developments in seismic instrumentation, data communication and computer systems. We therefore welcome the consensus which has now been reached on this issue in the Group of Scientific Experts (GSE). I refer you to the recently published fifth report by that Group (CD/903). This report, which marks yet another milestone in the work of the GSE, describes how recent technological and scientific developments can be applied in designing a modern international seismic data exchange system. The aim of this work is significantly to enhance the confidence with which a future comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty can be monitored.

The working paper we are presenting today as document CD/935 contains a brief summary of recent developments in the Norwegian seismic verification programme. The paper outlines the results of the operation of the two regional arrays in Norway, NORESS in southern Norway and ARCESS in northern Norway. These two arrays incorporate the most recent achievements in seismology and have shown outstanding capabilities in detecting small seismic events, both at close distances and in remote areas. This underlines the importance of the Norwegian proposal that the global network should, in so far as practicable, emcompass small-aperture seismic arrays. In addition, the working paper deals with the Second Technical Test which will be conducted by the Group of Scientific Experts, views on an integrated processing system for networks of arrays, and information on the new Norwegian National Data Centre.

As announced by State Secretary Hernes in April, Norway plans to arrange a workshop in Oslo in February 1990 on the subject of regional arrays and their use in seismic verification research. The workshop will be hosted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and NORSAR.

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Among others, experts from the Group of Scientific Experts will be invited to this workshop, which will address a number of the most important technical problems in the field of seismological verification. A report on the proceedings from the workshop will be made available to the Conference on Disarmament, and will also be distributed to the scientific community.

In closing, let me just reiterate the great interest of Norway in the efforts being made in this negotiating forum. We hope that the two documents we have presented today will constitute a useful contribution to the work of this Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and for the kind words that he has addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Chile, Mr. Romero.

Mr. ROMERO (Chile) (translated from Spanish): At the outset of this first statement by Chile in the Conference on Disarmament, allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the distinguished representative of Mexico in his capacity as the previous President for the way in which each of you has conducted the work of the Conference during this second session of 1989. At the same time, I wish to thank all the delegations that made it possible at the beginning of the year for Chile to join the Conference as a non-member.

The decision of Chile to participate in these debates has its basis in the permanent respect my country has shown in its foreign conduct for fundamental legal principles such as non-intervention, self-determination of peoples and abstention from the threat or use of force in international relations. Accordingly, Chile favours peaceful settlement of all conflicts and considers that through disarmament it is possible to achieve the progress and well-being of mankind.

Moreover, my country notes with satisfaction that at the end of the 1980s, which were largely marked by stagnation, not to say setbacks, in virtually every area related to disarmament, there has taken shape a promising process affording a real and concrete chance of maintaining peace and security and international justice. That is an encouraging result of the steps taken by many States to re-establish mutual confidence between the various members of the international community. An eminent role has been played in this respect by the great Powers, which, in a renewed spirit of bilateralism, have reached important agreements that have helped to form the new climate in which present-day international relations are developing.

All of this, in addition to gratifying us and filling us with optimism, gives us cause for thought in view of the virtually unique opportunity of making progress in solving the varied and important problems that we still face in the sphere of disarmament. Therefore, my country believes that the bilateralism to which I have referred should be accompanied by renewed impetus in the multilateral negotiations, since these are the ones which, with no discrimination or objectionable exceptions, can succeed in representing the overall interests of the members of the world community.

(Mr. Romero, Chile)

In this regard, Chile reaffirms the urgent need to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the sphere of disarmament, and it is this Conference that constitutes the most suitable forum for discharging that important function. Hence our interest in being present in these negotiations and our willingness to co-operate in all initiatives that may require our support; as of now we place ourselves at the disposal of the Bureau and the chairmen of the various working groups, the secretariat and the other delegations here present to co-operate in all relevant matters.

Unfortunately, for financial reasons closely linked to our position as a developing country, we cannot have the same kind of delegation to the Conference that many other countries do. But that will not be an obstacle to our expressing our views and presenting for the consideration of the Conference working papers that we consider capable of contributing to the analysis of the various items on our agenda as we have already done with respect to the item on outer space. Along with this we are training officials in specialized areas and that is why we wish to make special mention of the opportunity given to one of them this year to participate in the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme.

The new atmosphere I have referred to has also had a positive influence at the Latin American regional level. Our peoples and Governments have been able to see that disarmament and peace can be achieved if there is real political will on the part of the decision-makers. But it is not enough for international agreements to increase security and guarantee peace. Chile believes further that the substantial financial resources released by these agreements should be oriented towards international co-operation, especially towards the developing countries which today are facing extremely grave problems of indebtedness and economic stagnation. Measures of such a nature would contribute to laying the foundation for real solidarity and international justice.

Allow me in the following minutes to express my country's general views on various matters on the agenda for the Conference.

Firstly, the nuclear danger, by its nature and the risk it involves, should have a prime place within the negotiations in this forum. My country has resolutely supported the agreements reached by the two major military Powers culminating in the signing in December 1987 of the Treaty on the elimination of shorter-range and intermediate-range nuclear weapons. It has also supported the negotiations on reducing strategic weapons. We think that initiatives of this nature not only help to reduce the risk of a world-wide conflagration but also strengthen international confidence and make possible concrete steps towards the limitation of conventional weapons. In this respect, we view positively the development there has been in the concept of "strategic deterrence", which was basically being used as a valid argument for the qualitative and quantitative improvement of the capacity of weapons, with the consequent untrammelled arms race between the said Powers.

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As to the demilitarization of outer space, my country favours the complete elimination of every type of weapon, whether nuclear or not. In this respect, it should be noted that Chile signed the Treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water in 1963 and is therefore subject to its provisions. We have not signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of the Emplacement of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction on the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor and in the Subsoil Thereof, because we do not agree with the formula agreed for verification, but we do undoubtedly uphold the lofty aims that were taken into account in concluding it in 1971.

For its part, the conventional arms race is of deep concern to us. This applies in particular to the nuclear countries, which, being unable to use those weapons, have proceeded with sophisticated technological advances in conventional weapons, attaining a high degree of efficiency that has at the same time entailed an extremely costly arms race. Moreover, the competition between the major Powers has spread to the rest of the developed countries, a process in which the less developed countries have subsequently become involved.

The possibilities of moving forward on the road to disarmament are, then, negatively affected by this competition, which has both qualitative and quantitative aspects, since the decisive factor in the forecasting of possible future conflicts is the search for more efficient military technology and that in turn brings about premature obsolescence of military technology.

We therefore believe that greater emphasis must be placed on the adoption of concrete measures to limit the qualitative aspect of the arms race. We also feel that, to succeed in stopping the arms race in qualitative terms, the work should be carried out within a framework that guarantees the security of States without forgetting their right to national and collective self-defence as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

I have left for the end of this statement a brief analysis of the question of chemical weapons, which has taken on vital importance in this Conference and is currently the subject of discussion in the plenary. The relevant Ad Hoc Committee has achieved progress that is insufficient in the light of the mandate conferred upon it by the Final Declaration adopted by the special conference on chemical weapons held in Paris last January. Chile took part in that meeting because it is convinced that chemical weapons must be prohibited definitively and eliminated as soon as possible in view of their particularly cruel toxic and environmental effects, their indiscriminate nature, the difficulty or impossibility of controlling their spread or direction and the risk of their use by terrorists or irresponsible persons.

Moreover, the mere suspicion that a State possesses chemical weapons immediately creates in other States a perception of a threat that promotes the escalation of mistrust and the heightening of international tension.

It is not our intention to engage in a detailed technical study of the draft convention the Conference is negotiating, but we believe that the future treaty, as well as guaranteeing the establishment of effective, universal,

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mandatory, equitable and non-discriminatory verification machinery, should be sufficiently explicit about the point that the inspections necessary to prevent chemical weapons production should not constitute any obstacle to the development of the chemical industry for peaceful purposes or a pretext for action having other ends. Inspection must, moreover, be harmoniously combined with State sovereignty.

Similarly, it should be laid down that States that use chemicals, even for purposes not prohibited by the convention, will be subject to a régime of strict liability, whether the harm that may be caused is direct, indirect or delayed. There should also be rules to cover the problem of transboundary pollution which, in the event that it occurs, should be subject to the principle that national territory cannot be used to the detriment of third States. Finally, consideration should be given to aspects such as the commitment of all parties to destroy the chemical weapons in their possession or under their control and the establishment of a more precise framework for the use of chemicals in the maintenance of public order within each State. This concept must be more clearly defined in order not to leave the door open for the use of certain substances which, while not lethal, can have extremely injurious consequences for people's health. It is urgent to redouble the efforts to reach definitive agreements in this sphere as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Chile for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the President.

I have no other speakers listed to address the Conference today. Does any other representative wish to take the floor at this stage? That does not seem to be the case.

I have requested the secretariat to circulate today the timetable of meetings to be held by the Conference and its subsidiary bodies during the coming week. As usual, the chairmen of subsidiary bodies have been consulted. The timetable is merely indicative and we may change it if the need arises. On that understanding, I propose that we adopt the timetable.

It was so decided.

Distinquished delegates, as today's meeting is the last plenary meeting for the month of July, allow me to make a brief concluding statement in my capacity as President of the Conference, at the end of the presidency of Mongolia for this month.

As you are aware, I have had consultations during July on various issues pertaining to organizational arrangements for agenda items 1, 2, 3 and 7 as well as to the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament and expansion of its membership.

I should like to mention especially the on going consultations with a view to facilitating progress on item 1 of our agenda, "Nuclear test ban". As you will recall, on 6 July I stressed the importance of the efforts undertaken by Ambassador Yamada of Japan and encouraged him to proceed with his informal individual consultations.

(The President)

Although differences still exist, it seems to me that at last we are close to developing an adequate and acceptable organizational arrangement for consideration of this agenda item. In their plenary statements during the month of July a number of delegations touched on this vital issue and expressed individual and group positions of States. I do hope that Ambassador Yamada will continue his consultations and I wish him every success in his endeavours.

As regards the consultations on how to deal with agenda items 2, 3 and 7, it has unfortunately not been possible so far to reach agreement on these questions. I think, however, that it might be worth while for us to look again, in the case of agenda item 2, to the 1987 arrangement. As you may recall, during that annual session, we were able usefully to discuss matters relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.

I also held consultations with the chairmen of the Ad Hoc Committees concerning the time-frame for submission of the various sections of the annual report. It was emphasized that reports of the subsidiary bodies would have to be submitted for processing in a gradual way so as to avoid delays in documentation. Accordingly a schedule for the submission of draft reports was adopted. I am sure that the chairmen of the Ad Hoc Committees will make every effort to meet this schedule.

The Conference also held an informal meeting to consider further measures in the field of disarmament for the prevention of an arms race on the sea-bed, the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof, in response to the invitation addressed to it by the Preparatory Committee of the Third Review Conference of the Parties to the Sea-bed Treaty. I believe that the discussion was useful and provided a good opportunity for those addressing the issues to present their views on such an important question.

A number of delegations, while stressing the pivotal role of the Conference on Disarmament, expressed their concern regarding the credibility of this forum in view of the gap between the declared objectives and the results achieved. I cannot but share this concern. The question of the improved and effective functioning of the Conference on Disarmament thus deserves our serious consideration.

The remaining month before the end of this year's session should be used to the fullest for the search of appropriate solutions to the above-mentioned outstanding issues. I likewise hope that the subsidary bodies which will be working during August will redouble their efforts in order to accomplish more substantive work during that month.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all delegations for their kind support and co-operation, which made my task easier. This month has been, for me personally, a memorable and highly rewarding one. I wish success to my successor, Ambassador Benhima of Morocco, and to assure him of my delegation's full co-operation.

(The President)

I would also like to thank most sincerely the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Ambassador Komatina, and the Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Berasategui, for their co-operation and invaluable assistance. My thanks go to the other members of the secretariat and the interpreters, translators and staff members of Conference Services for their dedication and assistance.

That concludes my closing statement.

Before adjourning, I should like to recall that the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-nuclear-weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons will meet immediately after the plenary in this conference room.

As there is no other business, I intend now to adjourn the plenary meeting.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Tuesday, 1 August, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.